

2010-2011 edition

the magical Shuswap

MAKING MEMORIES

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION BY **OKANAGANLife**
magazine

by Laurie Carter

WE'VE PACKED A LOT OF MEMORIES INTO FOUR YEARS OF ANNUAL PILGRIMAGES TO THE SHUSWAP. My husband Bruce and I always start out with a loose agenda of must-sees and must-dos, and every visit also produces a few unexpected treasures. I thought it would be fun to revisit some of the highlights presented here in no particular order. I invite you to share eight of our memories that capture the magic.



Watch the Birdie

Bruce has been waiting to take me to the Tom Brighthouse Nature Centre at the foot of the Salmon Arm Pier where he saw a terrific video of the grebes' famous mating dance this morning (while I shopped). We're surprised to find the door locked, although it's still half an hour from closing time. But a note taped to the window says we'll find "Mike" on the pier.

We do. He's easy to identify, what with the tripod-mounted spotting scope and all. I immediately latch onto what he's studying—a pair of osprey perched on a square green navigation marker. Suddenly a shape unfolds, to unbelievable proportions. The great wingspan momentarily spreads then streamlines as the bird torpedoes into the water—rising with a silver-sided fish struggling its death throes in the grip of relentless talons.

The hunter lights on a lower spreader of the navigation marker, safely removed from the other bird who watches from above. A third swoops in, slowly folding its wings as it settles next to the watcher. I'm glued to the action, exchanging exclamations with Mike and shooting digital bursts through my 300mm lens (churlishly thinking how much better Bruce's shots will be with his 500mm). At first I think what I'm seeing is two jealous birds waiting for an opportunity to cadge scraps from a successful rival. But it slowly dawns on me that the tone of the calls from the onlookers

could be more encouraging than taunting. Mike confirms that the lucky fisherman is this year's fledgling. Mom and dad are conducting lessons. This is fishing school.

The birdlife is so varied—and so close. When I tear my eyes from the drama on the marker, I see a huge heron standing just across the channel at the water's edge. Canada geese poke about in the shallows and on the eastern side of the pier, another heron perches on a buoy.

Mike has already retreated to close up the Nature Centre, so I have to hurry to catch up for a look at that video. I find him waiting for me, gracious, even though his wife and visiting family have arrived to collect him. As he shows me the various features of the centre—books, videos, stuffed specimens, charts, photos—they chip in, making sure I catch the dancing grebes and

OSPREY PARENTS SUPERVISE JUNIOR'S FISHING LESSON WHILE A HERON WADES IN THE SHALLOWS. SALMON ARM PIER AND THE NATURE TRAIL AROUND SALMON ARM BAY ARE OUTSTANDING OPTIONS FOR BIRDWATCHERS BOTH DEDICATED AND CASUAL

PHOTOS BY LAURIE CARTER

the magical Shuswap

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demonstrating how to make a toy loon give forth with its lonely call.

The centre is open daily throughout the summer, staffed by a student on weekdays and by volunteer members of the Salmon Arm Bay Nature Enhancement Society, like Mike, on weekends. He offers me a brochure that outlines the society's work and includes a map of the nature trail that rims the bay to the east. New item on the to-do list for tomorrow.



THE SALMON ARM ROOTS AND BLUES
FESTIVAL RUNS AUGUST 13-15, 2010

Roots & Blues

Call it a memory in waiting. Call it poor planning. Every year our note to self reads: schedule Shuswap trip for mid-August and take in the Roots & Blues Fest. So far, something's always foiled our timing, but we're determined to finally unfold our lawn chairs in front of the main stage at the Salmon Arm Fairgrounds, with a spectacular sunset silhouetting Mount Ida, and settle in for some serious music.

The festival's 18th season, August 13-15, 2010, features a lineup we really don't want to miss. Martha Wainright is slated to perform a selection of rare Edith Piaf songs and I'm totally up for the raucous horns and drums of that funky Latin orchestra from Texas called Grupo Fantasma. F-Holes, from Manitoba, plays rockabilly bass, jazz banjo, bluegrass trumpet,

surf guitar and swingin' drums. We want to catch Juno Award winner Julian Fauth's blues tunes, the musical poetry of Gord Downie and we've seen Quebec's Erik Mongrain on YouTube — can't wait to watch that two-handed guitar tapping live.

Although we don't know a lot of the acts, like hip-hop artist K'naan, singer/pianist Royal Wood, the Kropotkins, the MarchFourth Marching Band, Ohbijou, Wassabi Collective and Elena Yeung, we're pretty sure we're going to hear some tunes that'll make us want to add to the CD collection.

White Water WOW!

"Arms are for crawling, feet are for fending off rocks," says Jamie. Our Adams River Rafting guide's no-nonsense tone grabs the atten-

ROOTS AND BLUES PHOTOS BY CRAIG PULSIFER,
(FACING PAGE) TOP PHOTO BY LAURIE CARTER, BOTTOM PHOTO COURTESY OF ADAMS RIVER RAFTING



RAFTING THE ADAMS: CLASS-III RAPIDS AND A LOOK AT A 500-YEAR-OLD PICTOGRAPH

tion of every yellow-vested paddler. We're gathered like a swarm of anxious hornets on a narrow patch of dirt beach beside three sausage sided rafts. The easy flow of green water beyond gives no hint of the dangers Jamie describes — but we know what's coming.

I'm finding it a little hard to breathe, though that's probably because of the life jacket. My boat captain, Clif, cinched me in so tight I've gained a whole new respect for great-granny and her hourglass corsets. But I'm not complaining about the company's penchant for safety. "In the unlikely event" that




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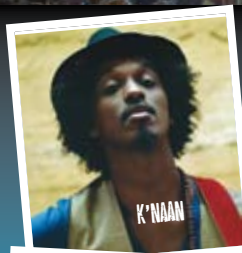
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The Swing's the Thing

I should fall off the raft, the only way back aboard is to be hoisted by the lapels of that jacket. Given the alternative of riding the river solo, fending off rocks with my feet, swimming for my life away from log jams and eventually clawing my way ashore, I'm more than happy to do without oxygen for the duration.

The July sun beats on my helmet, threatening to fry the little grey matter left inside. Wading our raft into the current, I bless the deliciously cool water—so clear I can pick out individual river rocks on the bottom. If we were here in early October, I wouldn't be able to see those rocks for the swarms of red-bodied sockeye. But right now, I need to forget about fish, keep time with the stroke paddler and concentrate on Clif's commands. "Forward, right—back left—stop!"

I catch a glimpse of lighter green. Our bow bucks skyward. A flash of blue and—half the river lands square on my face. "Awesome!" I scream, along with every other member of the crew. Soaked to the skin, laughing like a pack of deranged hyenas, we're ready to take on the string of rapids leading to The Canyon where the banks converge, churning the flow through a rock-walled gap a mere seven metres wide.

In the tranquil backwater below, we beach our rafts and I stagger ashore on Jell-O legs. While my heart rate steadies, Jamie points out the pictograph of a deer, painted by a Shuswap fisherman some 500 years ago. Standing on these rocks, natives used dip nets to harvest the wealth of the river. Along with supplying a rich food source, the fish could be traded for obsidian to make tools and ochre for paint. With such a reliable grocery store, the Shuswap had time to be artistic.

In the quiet stretch beyond, some of us slip into the water, and holding fast to the safety lines on the side of the raft, soak in the spirit of the river as the current slides us toward the end of an adventure.

So many courses, so little time—OK, so little interest. Don't get me wrong, it's not that I don't like golf. I've even been told I have a pretty good swing (triple-digit scores notwithstanding), it's just that there are so many things I enjoy even more when I'm visiting the Shuswap.

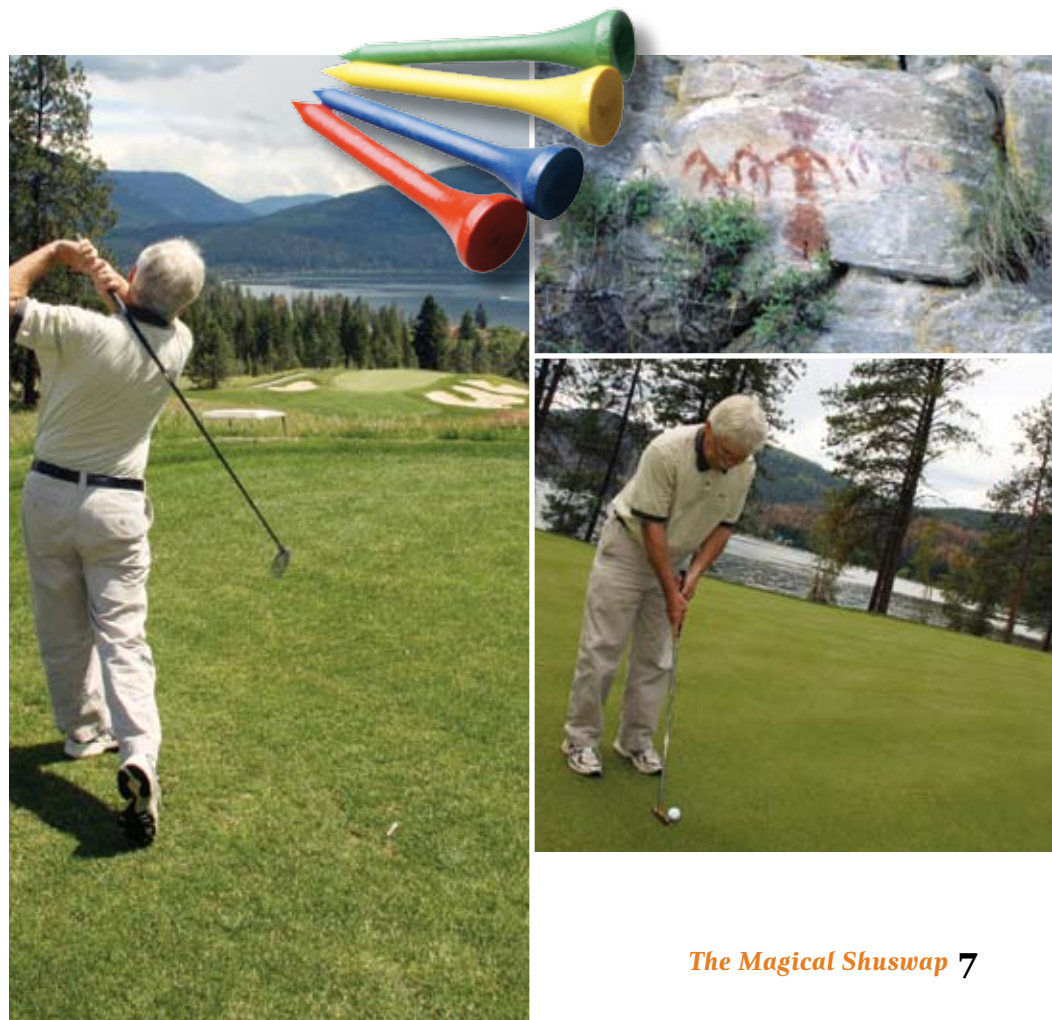
If my priorities were right, I could tee up along the shores of Mara Lake at Hyde Mountain, play the contours of Mount Ida at the Salmon Arm Golf Club, tackle the British-style fairways at Canoe Creek or try to ignore the views at Shuswap Lake Estates. But the only course I've managed to play in all these years is Talking Rock.

I've read that the Little Shuswap Indian Band chose the name in recognition of their ancestors' practice of recording historic events and legends by painting or carving on rocks. I saw some of these ancient pictographs on a cruise aboard the Phoebe Ann one summer.

See how I get sidetracked? Back to golf. The championship course measures 7,129 yards for par 72 (in my dreams). From the reds, it's a blessedly more manageable 5,437 or I'd still be out there. My score is over 72—enough said.

It's a beautiful round, even though the shredded clouds reveal only rare hints of blue. The holes, from tee to green, are nibbled out of the forest. Many, especially on the back nine, are laid out with so much space between fairways that you feel entirely alone.

My favourite tee box is elevated, treating me not only to a sight of the lake (along with the standard mountain views), but also a killer drive. On 17 the lake glimpses come more often and 18 parallels the shore. Nice.



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Throughout the summer this charming community comes alive with music. The much loved Wednesday on the wharf evening concert series at Marine Park offers an array of musical talent for your listening pleasure.

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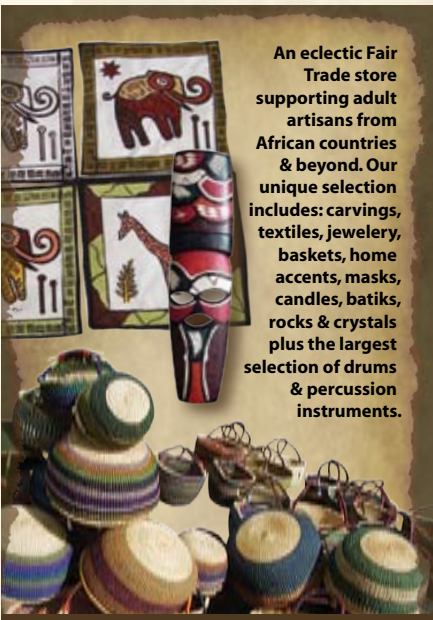


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Wine Time & Geocaching Finds

Pursuing our recurring theme of potent potables, one Saturday morning we search out Larch Hills Winery—a trek that eventually combines a healthy bit of mountain climbing and a quick spot of geocaching. The Shuswap region has taken to this high-tech treasure hunting in a big way with the Shuswap Geoquest website devoted to local events and games. We're no 10-cache-a-day addicts, but it's fun to pull out the GPS and track down a site or two and we've identified one that should be close to the winery. Talk about a treasure hunt.

The switchback road to Larch Hills ribbons through tall borders of cedar, hemlock, fir and (wait for it) larch, the "evergreens" that put on a brilliant golden show come fall. Wondering where a grape could find any sunlight in all this dense bush, we suddenly top a ridge; the forest parts and the road abruptly ends at a lookout with 270 degrees of deep valley, serried mountain, lake and forest view—and fanning

SHUSWAP WINERIES INCLUDE LARCH HILLS, GRANITE CREEK AND RECLINE RIDGE

across the south to west-facing slope, neat ranks of tethered vines.

GPS readings tell us we're close to the cache, but it still takes a thorough search to find it. We sign the log and spend some time with the view that I'd say is the real treasure here before moving on to our ultimate reward.

A stunning blonde with riveting china-blue eyes and a ready smile towers over the pine bar of the alpine-style tasting shop, pouring samples of the winery's signature Ortega white. Hazel Manser and her husband Jack were new to the wine business when they bought Larch Hills. Recently married, the Dutch-Swiss couple brought enthusiasm and a strong work ethic and learned from previous owner Hans Nevrkla, continuing the tradition of turning out crisp and lively cool climate whites such as Ortega, Siegerrebe, Madeleine Angevine and the red Agria. Our trunk emits a satisfyingly musical clink as we retreat down the mountain.



STEP INTO SHUSWAP HISTORY AT THE R.J. HANEY HERITAGE VILLAGE AND MUSEUM IN SALMON ARM

Historic Munch & Mingle

There's another theme in our travels—food never being far from our thoughts. Today we're doing lunch at Marjorie's Tea Room in the North Broadview School at R.J. Haney Heritage Village and

PHOTOS BY LAURIE CARTER

Museum. We leave the car near the Queest fire lookout tower and walk to the cluster of historic buildings.

This isn't our first visit. In the past we've enjoyed browsing through the filling station and fire hall, blacksmith shop and the old storefront with the gramophone collection and recorded gramophone music. The inside of Mount Ida church is as simple and appealing as the outside and the schoolroom definitely stirs some memories.

We still haven't managed to work in a performance at the summer dinner theatre, but today we take time to tour the museum, a good call since there's a new exhibit. It tells the truly unique story of entrepreneur, Percy Ruth, who with the help of local First Nations people, collected seeds that reforested parts of Britain and Europe following the demands and destruction of the First World War.

After that unexpected discovery, we've got plenty to talk about over a nostalgic lunch of tourtiere and salad, thick beef barley soup with homemade bread and fresh baked pie. Sigh!

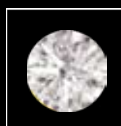


THE SALMAR THEATRE IS ONE OF THE BONUS ATTRACTIONS IN DOWNTOWN SALMON ARM

Fashion Flare and Artistic Wares

It's an easy walk from the Salmon Arm waterfront, where my shopping expedition could be stalled indefinitely by a stop at JC Bradley Jewellers (can't resist bright, shiny things) or a sidetrip to the Canoe

PHOTO BY LAURIE CARTER



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Creek Clothing Company, to Salmon Arm's retail district centred on Lakeshore Drive and Hudson Avenue. A friendly area, I admire a forest of freeform sculptures, catch a busking juggler in the act and stroll along Alexander Street, with its Art Deco Salmar Classic Theatre, which also appears to be Salmon Arm fashion central. I stop to browse in shops with inviting displays and intriguing names like Crazy River, Factor 3, Wearabouts and Shoes 'n Such, and the more prosaic Salmon Arm Clothing & Shoe Company.

My recycle shopping bags are already beginning to fill when I turn onto Lakeshore Drive, anchored by the historic 1929 Merchant's Block, and discover a trove of irresistible dump trucks, games and wooden toys in Nurtured by Nature. My inner grandmother satisfied, and bags a little more heavily loaded, I move on and soon find myself making two unexpected Shuswap memories.

It was the ornate Victorian screen door that attracts my attention. Inside Loriginals, I feel sensory overload from the colours, shapes and materials worked into the crafts and artwork on display. I'm standing before a tall case of beautifully tooled leatherwork, when a quiet voice at my shoulder asks if I'm looking for anything in particular.

I fall into conversation with Joy Oates who explains that she and co-owner Linda Vogel are focused on items handcrafted in Canada and featuring local artists. The leatherwork is done by Murray and Annette Anderson, from Salmon Arm. Those stunning metalwork and porcelain pieces (among their best sellers) are crafted by Peter and Erika Postel from Blind Bay while another Salmon Arm artist, Jim Jurasek, paints the watercolours.

Joy shepherds me around the shop, pointing out pottery and raku from PEI, metal sculptures from Abbotsford and jewelry from a variety of sources, emphasizing their determination to maintain the Canadian craft specialization because visitors expect it. She says, "People come year after year, from

Canada and Europe." As she walks me to the door, I speculate that I'll become one of the faithful.

A few steps down the street, the shop window couldn't be less Canadian. A trio of painted giraffes gawk out of Gondwana Gallery amid an assortment of hanging drums. As I push through the door a heavy pall of incense assaults my nose. I really hate incense — puts me right back in the 60s, gives me a headache. Normally I'd do an instant about face and head for fresh air. But there's so much cool stuff, must explore.

I recognize wooden bowls and carvings, wire sculptures and pop can art, lively banana leaf batiks — all familiar from craft markets I've visited in Africa.

A lanky guy wearing a wide grin strides toward me. I can see he's a man with a story. Owner Tibout Glazenburg and his wife Marlene lived in South Africa for 17 years before moving to Canada. "We became familiar with local artisans and assisted them in marketing and selling their wares," he says. "For many, this is how they make a living."

Now the couple returns to Africa each year, continuing to buy direct, dealing with artisans in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique,

SHOPPERS FIND PLENTY OF VARIETY THROUGHOUT THE SHUSWAP IN ARTS AND CRAFTS STUDIOS, PRODUCE MARKETS, FASHION BOUTIQUES, GIFT SHOPS AND FARMERS' MARKETS IN SALMON ARM AND SORRENTO

PHOTOS BY LAURIE CARTER

South Africa and Zimbabwe. Tibout says they currently support 27 families in this way, plus two orphanages (one in Kenya and one in Tanzania) through local fundraisers.

"We only buy handcrafted items directly from the artisan on a fair trade basis—no sweatshops, no child labour," he says. "We pay up front. No consignments." The Glazenburg's pack and ship everything themselves.

Tibout zips around the store, holding up a rock carving from Zimbabwe, fingering the intricate design of a Maasai wedding collar. He talks fast, trying to get it all in, rushing to show me angels and tea, wall hangings and mini-Christmas baskets.

Then he slows, quietly lifting the photo of an artist from the midst of a display of her jewelry. His face clouds. "Many of them have AIDS," he says. "We never know who will be there next year."

But the mood brightens when he moves on to the djembes—drums from Ghana. Seems Tibout is a drummer himself, teaches drumming in Salmon Arm. Right! Glad I ignored the incense.

At Home on a Boat

We pass several houseboat marinas and pull up at Twin Anchors where our friends wave from the sundeck of a CruiseCraft 3. Can we say palatial? This floating cottage is loaded with amenities that make lots of condos look rustic—full-sized fridge and stove, microwave, washer/dryer, private staterooms (sounds like a cruise ship), two bathrooms, a living area with plenty of seating—and, get ready—a fireplace.

Picture yourself beached on a remote shore, miles from towns or roads or even other boats, sitting in a top-deck hot tub, sipping a Recline Ridge Optima and counting the shooting stars. Been there—done that.

The best part is jumping out of the tub and screaming (literally) down the built-in slide. I'm

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SICAMOUS, HOUSEBOAT CAPITAL OF CANADA, IS HOME BASE FOR SHUSWAP LAKE EXPLORERS



here to tell you, in September, Shuswap Lake is C-O-L-D. But I did it again... and again.

Sunday morning we head back down Anstey Arm past the floating commissary in the middle of Cinnemousun Narrows, which is the slim channel that makes the crossbar in the "H" formed by the four main arms of Shuswap Lake.

Our houseboat is an ideal vantage point for viewing pictographs we've been given directions to find on the sheer rock cliffs a few metres above the high-water mark. Native artists created these images more than 200 years ago.

Not far down the coast, the Marble Point lighthouse comes into view. We approach the shore slowly until the bow grates onto the gravel beach and the houseboat jerks to a halt. The crew (read the guys) runs out the gangway and the ladies step ashore without so much as a damp toe.

This is our lunch stop and barbecue smoke soon mingles with the scent of cedar and fir from the tangled forest. Bruce and I perch on a convenient driftwood log and lay into our best-ever burgers. It's uncanny how great food tastes when your dining room is miles from the nearest human

dwelling, your shoulders feel warm from the autumn sun and every time you look up from your plate, there's something appealing to catch your eye—a lighthouse framed by the distant snow-tipped Anstey Range; a pair of mergansers cruising the shoreline; shiny wavelets tickling the boat's white hull.

Snowy Tracks

This is another memory-in-waiting, one I admit may be a long time coming. Winter just isn't my favourite season. I do enjoy the occasional trek through the frozen woods on a pair of snowshoes, but the idea of skiing uphill makes me shudder and I'm not into motorized sledding—so the Shuswap's biggest winter attractions pretty much leave me, well, cold.

But for throngs of intrepid Nordic skiers who (to my everlasting amazement) freeheel down what I consider to be black diamond runs and herringbone up virtual cliff faces (seriously—how do they do that), the Shuswap provides a wealth of stunning terrain.

The Larch Hills cross-country ski area, 20 kilometres from Salmon Arm, maintains 125 kilome-



tres of trails, about a third of which are track set—and plenty that are level enough to prevent even me from whining too much, although I'm a lot more likely to tackle them in a pair of hiking boots in summer. But I digress. The facilities at Larch Hills include a chalet and a couple of warming cabins on the trails. (Excellent—notice how I warm to the idea of warming.)

Back on track, Larch Hills hosts the highly regarded Reino Keski-Salmi Loppet. For those

who know what this means (and I'm counting myself out, here) 2010 is the 26th year for this event, which is geared to both competitive and recreational skiers.

Another set of winter tracks where there's no chance of us meeting is near Sicamous. Dedicated snowmobilers have created four reputedly outstanding trail systems. Riders can head into the backcountry on easy groomed trails or tackle remote powder bowls (always paying close attention to avalanche risk) at Owlhead Mountain, Quest Mountain, Blue Lake and Eagle Pass. **OL**

NORDIC SKIERS, SNOWSHOERS AND SNOWMOBILERS MAKE TRACKS ON THE SHUSWAP'S SPECTACULAR WINTER TRAILS

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